

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Sanford Bishop released the following statement regarding President Bush's proposed Fiscal Year 2006 budget:

"Reviewing the President's proposed FY 2006 budget, I was pleased by the important investment that he continues to make in our national defense as well as the global war on AIDS. However, my fellow Georgians have reason to be concerned with many of the choices that he would make on our behalf. Our community depends on federal dollars to support important programs and services including assistance to family farms and small businesses, providing quality education to our children and supporting our veterans. This is why it is important that our federal budget reflect our values as a nation, yet the budget the President presented us with today falls tragically short.

"I believe in the importance of fiscal discipline, the value of balancing our books and of not leaving our children and our children's children to pay our debts, yet the proposed FY 2006 budget would add more than \$4 trillion to the deficit over the next 10 years. This number can only grow as the budget fails to include the coming year's expenditures in Iraq and Afghanistan. And it fails to include any additional details on the Bush Administration's plan to overhaul the Social Security system, which alone is estimated to cost taxpayers more than \$754 billion in additional debt.

"In addition, the President is proposing the reduction or elimination of 150 non-defense discretionary programs in order to respond to record budget deficits, but even eliminating every dollar of discretionary spending would not balance the budget. I believe that in times of national and fiscal crisis, sacrifices need to be made, but they need to be made by all Americans. It is unfair to scale back government programs that benefit hard working families in order to fund tax cuts that most benefit the wealthiest of Americans.

"Our federal budget must find a responsible way to meet our domestic and international obligations, while honoring our values. Values founded on our belief in opportunity and the sense of accountability, fairness and community that define us as a nation. This is the American Dream and this is the sacred trust that we in government hold with the constituents that we represent. This budget is a betrayal of that trust.

EDUCATION

"One out of every three government programs being cut concerns education. These cuts include the elimination of the Even Start Literacy program, Safe and Drug Free state school grants and the Arts in Education program. This is not something that the President should be bragging about, because not only does this budget increase the debt load for our future generations, it fails to invest in their future. It is wrong to be building schools in Iraq, when we are laying teachers off here at home.

VETERANS

"The President's budget continues to break our nation's promise to our veterans. The 1.7 percent increase it funds for medical programs over the funds appropriated for fiscal year 2005 is far from the 13-14 percent increase that the Veteran's Administration (VA) has testified it needs annually to even maintain the current level of services. Additionally the President seeks

to slash funding for the VA nursing home program and the state home nursing care program.

AGRICULTURE

“The President’s proposal to slash the Department of Agriculture’s spending by 10 percent is a betrayal of the trust of our farmers who were promised six years of market stability in the 2002 Farm Bill. Cuts to conservation, energy, rural development and research programs add up to close to \$1 billion in additional cuts for America’s Agriculture programs. Additionally, by restricting the maximum amount of farm support—known as payment limitations—regardless of the number of different crops and livestock produced, the farm’s organization or even the size of the farm, will create economic devastation for farm communities throughout Georgia and all of the Southeast United States.

HOUSING

“The President claims that he wants to increase the number of Americans who own homes, yet Section 235 and 236 programs, which provide home ownership and rental housing assistance, were cut from \$629 million to \$19 million effectively eliminating the programs. These programs are central to the goal of increasing home ownership as they provide assistance to prospective home owners, particularly those who are low and middle income. Additionally, he requests only \$2 million for the HOPE (Home Ownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere) grant program and eliminates the HOPE VI program, which provides grant money to revitalize severely distressed public housing. Which Congress has typically supported over the President’s objections.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

“The President’s proposal of a new “Economic Development Challenge” program does little to provide new economic development opportunities, rather masking the elimination of 18 existing federal economic development programs, such as the Community Development Block Grants, Community Services Block Grants, and the Economic Development Administration. Combined these programs have contributed more than \$6 billion to rural and urban communities across Georgia and the entire United States.

HOMELAND SECURITY

“The budget cuts funding for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program by \$480 million, and slashes funding for local firefighters by \$215 million – cuts of 80 percent and 30 percent, respectively. It also breaks the promise of putting an additional 2,000 border patrol agents on the job in 2006, as promised in landmark intelligence reforms passed late last year and endorsed by the 9/11 Commission. The budget provides funding for only 210 agents.”